

Defending America's First Responders

"We need to protect our protectors with the best equipment, training and resources we can. We must support our first responders with more than just words."

As a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator Mikulski is committed to helping firefighters and first responders get the support they need to keep Maryland and the nation safe.

Fighting for First Responders

Senator Mikulski created the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program and is dedicated to an increased federal investment in our volunteer firefighters and first responders:

- Working to restore significant fire grant funding to the federal budget so communities can continue to protect first responders without having to pay for needed equipment on their own.
- Maryland communities have been awarded over \$43 million in Firefighter Grants since 2001 to:
 - Purchase and update needed fire equipment.
 - Conduct fire safety education and awareness campaigns.
 - Increase training for firefighters and other essential first responders.

Urban Search and Rescue

Senator Mikulski knows that local authorities must also be ready to respond in national emergencies:

- Advocated increased funding for the federal Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Task Force program to give local communities the resources they need to assist in national disasters, which includes:
 - Increased funding to train and organize local task forces into integrated disaster response teams, which are deployed by FEMA in times of emergency.
- Montgomery County's USAR was among the task forces who heroically responded at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Providing Resources to Local Law Enforcement

Senator Mikulski is committed to working with federal partners for an increased investment in law enforcement programs including:

- Fighting to restore federal funding for local programs that help law enforcement agencies coordinate communication, equipment and training with each other to prepare for emergencies. This includes the:
 - Urban Areas Security Initiative
 - State Homeland Security Grant Program
 - Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program
- Calling on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to study the risk of cancer among firefighters, which resulted in:
 - A nationwide Hazardous Substance Training Program to educate firefighters on their potential for increased risks of health problems

Reforming the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Senator Mikulski believes that FEMA can play a vital role in preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters, and worked in the 1990s to reform FEMA into an all-hazards agency. Following the recent failure of FEMA to respond adequately to the tragedies of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Senator Mikulski is:

- Working to reform FEMA by:
 - Establishing FEMA as an independent agency to minimize bureaucracy and maximize responsiveness.
 - Making sure FEMA is professional by guaranteeing that leadership and staff have a background in crisis management and emergency response.
- Making sure FEMA adheres to the *Three R's of Preparedness*:
 - **Ready** for both predictable and sudden national disasters, ranging from hurricanes to terrorist attacks.
 - **Response**-focused to keep FEMA able to assist states and local governments with managing disasters as they occur.
 - **Recovery**-oriented in the wake of disasters in order to help communities stabilize and get back on their feet.